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JEFFORDS ANNOUNCES FEDERAL GRANTS TO STIMULATE RENEWABLE POWER, DISTRIBUTED ENERGY IN VERMONT

GRANTS SUPPORT TRAINING STUDENTS FOR WIND INDUSTRY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW WIND TECHNOLOGY

Waitsfield, Vermont - U.S. Sen. Jim Jeffords, I - Vt., today announced that he has secured $2.1 million to support the development of wind power and a new electricity distribution system in Vermont. Representatives from Northern Power Systems, Vermont Technical College (VTC) and the Vermont Department of Public Service (DPS) joined Jeffords in making the announcements.

Jeffords announced that over the last three years, he has secured $1.5 million to fund the DPS Wind Development Program, a portion of which has gone to VTC to support its efforts to train engineering students in wind technology.

Jeffords said, "Wind energy is the fastest growing sector of the electricity generation industry, with several world class manufacturers operating and growing here in Vermont. People often ask me, Where are the jobs of tomorrow? I say some of our best opportunities are right here under our noses. VTC is a state leader in providing the education and training necessary for its students to succeed in today's economy. VTC's partnership with the state and the wind industry represents a strategic alliance to propel young Vermonters into promising career opportunities in a rapidly expanding energy industry."

In addition to the funding supporting wind energy development, Jeffords also announced a $600,000 grant to support Northern Power System and the development of its MicroGrid® power system.

Northern's MicroGrid system puts the power sources close to the point of use, thereby avoiding the costs and maintenance of transmission lines associated with the delivery of a comparable amount of energy from large, central power plants.

According to Clint "Jito" Coleman, president of Northern Power Systems, the MicroGrid system is a tangible example of a progressive new strategy for the emerging decentralized energy landscape. "Northern's MicroGrid® power network combines multiple devices--including reciprocating engines (such as natural gas-powered generators), wind turbines, and solar photovoltaic panels into tightly integrated, small-scale power generation, storage, and distribution network," Coleman noted. "It is a practical strategy for addressing power reliability and power quality issues inherent in the U.S. electrical grid," he added.

Vermont Technical College President Allan Rodgers joined Jeffords for the event. With financial assistance from the DPS grants, VTC has installed a 10 kW wind turbine on its campus, and is integrating wind-engineering curriculum into its academic programs. Four VTC graduates are employed at Northern Power.

"Thanks to the work by Senator Jeffords and our state and industry partners, Vermont Tech is able to provide our students with the opportunity for hands-on learning important in preparing the next generation of professionals within the alternative energy engineering field," said Vermont Tech President Allan Rodgers. "This grant money has enabled the college to purchase wind turbine equipment that will allow our students to personally experiment with wind energy technology."

"We have been pleased to be a part of Senator Jeffords efforts to support renewable energy development," added Commissioner David O'Brien of the Vermont Department of Public Service. "Given the rapid advance of technology and ongoing concerns regarding fossil fuel prices and environmental impacts we need to develop a diverse energy portfolio. The Department of Public Service will continue to leverage federal resources to facilitate market development."

Jeffords continued, "Vermont is facing significant decisions in how we meet future electricity needs. These funds are helping to advance our understanding of a broader range of electricity options, including the potential for wind energy to contribute to our electric power demands."

- 30 -